

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 TRSE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5908

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0054

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, EFIN, LA, US

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF EMBASSY'S BANKING PROBLEMS WITH NEW
PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL BANK OF LAOS, THONGCHANH OUPRAVAN

REF: A. VIENTIANE 6685

B. STATE 304758

1. I PAID COURTESY CALL, ARRANGED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY, ON
NEW PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL BANK OF LAOS THONGCHANH OUPRAVAN
JANUARY 8. THONGCHANH, WHO WAS VERY MUCH THE MAN OF THE
PEOPLE DRESSED IN CLEAN BUT UNPRESSED SHIRT AND TROUSERS,
RECEIVED ME IN A VERY FRIENDLY MANNER AND ASSURED ME HIS
GOVERNMENT WANTED GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES.
I MADE MY USUAL PRESENTATION ON OUR DESIRE TO MAINTAIN
NORMAL RELATIONS AND PRESENTED THONGCHANH WITH A 1974
BICENTENNIAL FIRST-DAY COVER AND 1974 BICENTENNIAL COMMEM-
ORATIVE MEDAL (COURTESY OF USIA).

2. SINCE THIS WAS THE FIRST CONTACT WITH ANYONE OF AUTHORITY
IN THE BANK THAT WE HAD BEEN ABLE TO MAKE SINCE OUR
ACCOUNTS WERE FROZEN, I BRIEFED THONGCHANH IN DETAIL AND
LEFT WITH HIM AN INFORMAL SUMMARY OF OUR POSITION. HE LISTENED
ATTENTIVELY AND SAID IT WAS ALL NEW TO HIM, BUT HE WOULD
HAVE THE STAFF OF THE BANK STUDY THE MATTER AND THEN DISCUSS
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IT FURTHER WITH US. HE SAID THAT IF THE MONEY IN QUESTION WAS

USAID'S HE THOUGHT THE LAO WERE ENTITLED TO
IT. I TOLD HIM ONLY TWO SPECIFIC PORTIONS WERE USAID AND REST
WAS THE PROPERTY OF THE TREASURY. I ADDED THAT WE WOULD BE
READY FOR DISCUSSION AT HIS CONVENIENCE AND URGED THAT HIS
STAFF REVIEW ALL THE CORRESPONDENCE ON THIS SUBJECT BETWEEN
THE EMBASSY AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE, OF WHICH MY PAPER WAS
MERELY A SUMMARY.

3. COMMENT: WE DO NOT YET KNOW WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WILL
COME OF THIS BUT AT LEAST THE LAO GOVERNMENT AND ITS BANK
SEEM TO HAVE CHANGED THEIR ATTITUDE FROM ONE OF STONEWALLING
TO ONE OF AT LEAST BEING WILLING TO TALK.
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